

one, with a built-in uncertainty factor? Why not a static object?

People still tend to regard PK as an established fact, which it is not. I wrote to the *Journal* on this subject a long time ago, but my letter, published in March, 1962, failed to elicit a single response.

LUCIAN LANDAU

*ESP: A Scientific Evaluation*

SIR,—Mr Medhurst, in his reply to my letter on his review of C. E. M. Hansel's book *ESP: A Scientific Evaluation*, seems to have missed almost every one of my points.

(1) I did not take Mr Medhurst to task for citing Stevenson's critique rather than giving his own view and I intended no criticism of his doing this. (2) I did not purport in the sentence Mr Medhurst quotes to summarize his remarks on the Soal-Goldney experiments. (3) I did not, and do not, question Mr Medhurst's remark that 'Hansel presented [the periodicity in the Shackleton data] as evidence of the use of a substitution code'.

(4) When I said that Mr Medhurst agreed with Hansel's basic methodological position I did not say or mean to imply that he believed Hansel to have scrupulously stuck to this position. (5) When I said that Mr Medhurst 'apparently shares Hansel's scepticism about the Jones boys' I meant merely that Hansel and Medhurst are both sceptical on the matter—which is evidently true. (6) When I said that Mr Medhurst was unfair to Hansel about the Mrs Albert affair I was criticizing (and I said so) what seemed to be Mr Medhurst's contention that Hansel's 'shabbiness' consisted in his not mentioning the tale of the drugged cigarette; Mr Medhurst does not seem to have noticed that this is the point I was making.

(7) On the Schmeidler references, my point was that the criticism, though sound, was trivial and clearly did not justify Mr Medhurst finding it 'hard to avoid the impression that Hansel wishes to minimize Dr Schmeidler's work'. (8) As to Schmeidler's work itself and my own review thereof, my point related to the last sentence of Mr Medhurst's paragraph on this topic (p. 230), which is irrelevant if he had noticed my review.

(9) On the periodicity in the Shackleton data, I was merely answering Mr Medhurst's claim that this became irrelevant once the card substitution theory were withdrawn. Mr Medhurst's new observation, suggesting that the periodicity effect does not quite fit *any* theory, is interesting and I hope he will in due course develop it in more detail, giving due consideration to sampling error. However it does not affect my contention that the argument in his review was unjustified. (10) Regarding George Pellew's

mother, the relevant question is whether she said that the GP communications were 'utter drivel and inanity'. In his review Mr Medhurst appears to think it important that the context in which she was alleged to have said this never in fact existed. In the absence of a fuller explanation this is a weak argument indeed: the context might easily be misquoted but not the statement. Everything depends on how inextricably the context is linked to the statement. In his reply Mr Medhurst now gives some of the necessary clarification; perhaps if I had access to Rinn's book the matter would become completely clear and Mr Medhurst would be vindicated. But his treatment of the matter in his review was inadequate and demonstrated nothing of importance.

(11) As to Hansel's use of loaded language ('alleged' implying 'not true' in Mr Medhurst's vocabulary), this appears to me far-fetched but it is admittedly a matter of opinion. I would suggest that Mr Medhurst's use of the word 'cheating' on the 3rd line of p. 230 of his review is more loaded. And oddly enough Hansel *does* use the word 'allegation' in relation to Mrs Albert's claim (p. 117), just where Mr Medhurst complains that he does not. As a matter of fact it is extraordinarily difficult to engage in controversy without using the occasional word that appears loaded to one's opponent (Mr Medhurst's review certainly abounds in examples) but I do not think one should worry excessively about this.

(12) More important than any of these is Mr Medhurst's apparent failure to get my basic point. He characterizes me as arguing that although some trees have been felled the wood remains. But my whole point was that Mr Medhurst's criticisms were nearly all *trivial*. Mr Medhurst had felled twigs, not trees. However many twigs you cut the wood will still stand. Surely my harping on the word 'trivial' should have made it clear that this was my argument.

Finally may I add that, contrary to Mr Medhurst's belief, I am not a 'committed disbeliever', nor am I, when it comes to psychical research and questions of fraud, a 'fundamentally decent person'—in this context I give frankness priority over decency. I also believe that such speculations as to the character of a critic are not entirely appropriate material for publication in a scientific journal, and, finally, that fruitful controversy depends on giving painstaking attention to the precise arguments used by the other party.

This is a reply to a reply to a critique of a critique of a critique, and I think it only fair to promise you and your readers that it is the last time I shall be writing on this topic.

CHRISTOPHER SCOTT

SIR,—Mr Scott has evidently formed a low estimate of my powers of apprehension (he writes of my 'apparent failure to get [his] basic point', observes that I '[do] not seem to have noticed' another of his points, and is kind enough to draw my attention to the desirability in 'fruitful controversy' of 'giving painstaking attention to the precise arguments used by the other party'), but I would not grudge him the right to his opinion! However, in view of this it must be with some diffidence that I have to say that I can find little of substance in Mr Scott's final contribution to the discussion that he initiated. I see no need for me to make any further detailed comments, since by now anyone still interested would do best to go back to original sources (such as Rinn's unfortunate book, and Scott's review of the Schmeidler-McConnell book in the *S.P.R. Journal* for June 1959, with the replies by Dr McConnell and Dr Schmeidler). Readers must judge for themselves as between twigs and trees!

R. G. MEDHURST

### *Serios-Photos*

SIR,—Professor Rushton poses the 'key' question, 'Is it light that forms the Serios-photo' and thinks that, had 'various optical devices inside [the cameras] e.g. prisms, filters, polaroids . . . etc.' been used, 'the answer would have been "yes"'. (*Journal*, June 1968.) But various 'optical' devices *were* used on occasion in the Serios experiments, such as, for example, devices to block out all visible light. Under such conditions Serios has produced formed images as well as total reduction of the photo-emulsion (his 'whities' which, incidentally, he has also produced through prisms). He has also appeared to block all light from hitting the film surface without benefit of special devices (his 'blackies'). The difficulties, moreover, in the way of interpreting data relating to the behaviour of physical systems, be they prisms, filters, polaroids or what not, should these appear to act *as if* they were behaving normally on portions of the electromagnetic spectrum, are considerable (*The World of Ted Serios*, Chapter XI).

It may nevertheless be provisionally inferred, despite the inherent ambiguities in the interpretation of the data, that light may and presumably does sometimes play a variable role in the Serios phenomena. But it may well be that more than one mechanism, and more than one modality, is involved. Something other than ordinary light may also play a variable role. Currently under investigation is the possibility of the emanation from the